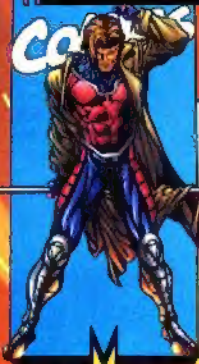


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#21

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NICIEZA  
PAQUETTE  
PARSONS

# GAMBIT VS. MYSTIQUE

THE  
SENTENCE  
IS DEATH!



OCT



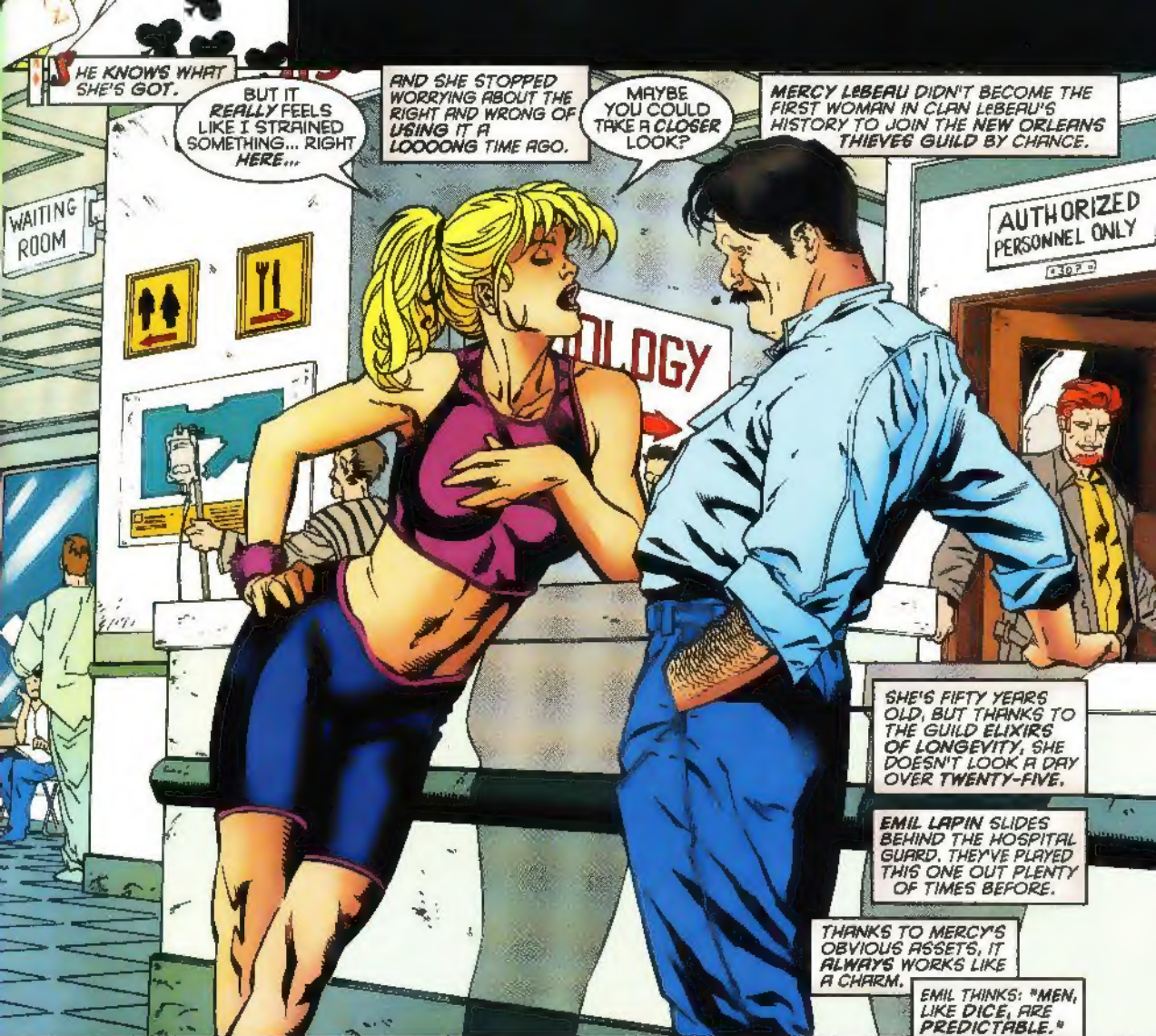
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TOP SECRET  
VANICK PAQUETTE  
SCAN PARSONS  
MIRACULUM





HE KNOWS WHAT SHE'S GOT.

BUT IT REALLY FEELS LIKE I STRAINED SOMETHING... RIGHT HERE...

AND SHE STOPPED WORRYING ABOUT THE RIGHT AND WRONG OF USING IT A LOOOONG TIME AGO.

MAYBE YOU COULD TAKE A CLOSER LOOK?

MERCY LEBEAU DIDN'T BECOME THE FIRST WOMAN IN CLAN LEBEAU'S HISTORY TO JOIN THE NEW ORLEANS THIEVES GUILD BY CHANCE.

AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY

SHE'S FIFTY YEARS OLD, BUT THANKS TO THE GUILD ELIXIRS OF LONGEVITY, SHE DOESN'T LOOK A DAY OVER TWENTY-FIVE.

EMIL LAPIN SLIDES BEHIND THE HOSPITAL GUARD. THEY'VE PLAYED THIS ONE OUT PLENTY OF TIMES BEFORE.

THANKS TO MERCY'S OBVIOUS ASSETS, IT ALWAYS WORKS LIKE A CHARM.

EMIL THINKS: "MEN, LIKE DICE, ARE PREDICTABLE."

REMY LEBEAU HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE OUTSIDER. ORPHANED AT BIRTH, HE WAS ADOPTED BY THE LEGENDARY THIEVES GUILD OF NEW ORLEANS WHO OFTEN SHUNNED HIM BECAUSE OF HIS STRANGE BURNING EYES. EVENTUALLY, HE REALIZED HE IS A MUTANT -- GIFTED AT BIRTH WITH THE ABILITY TO CHARGE INANIMATE OBJECTS WITH BIOKINETIC ENERGY THAT IS EXPLOSIVELY RELEASED! HE'S CHARMING. HE'S DEADLY. STAN LEE PRESENTS: THE MOST MYSTERIOUS X-MAN OF ALL!

**GAMBIT**

# A SHEEP IN FABIAN NICIEZA writer WOLF'S VANICK PAQUETTE penciler CLOTHING

SEAN PARSONS inks  
KEVIN TINSLEY colors RS & COMICRAFT'S TROY PETERI letters  
MIKE MARTS editor BOB HARRAS editor in chief

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OUTSIDE THE HOSPITAL, REMY LEBEAU -- GAMBIT -- MEMBER OF THE OUTLAW MUTANT FREEDOM FIGHTERS THE X-MEN, LEADER OF THE NEW ORLEANS UNIFIED GUILD AND DRINKER OF BAD, STALE COFFEE --

-- WONDERS IF THE PIT IN HIS GUT IS FROM THE COFFEE... OR FROM COWARDICE?

SHOULD HE BE IN THE HOSPITAL PERFORMING THE PINCH?

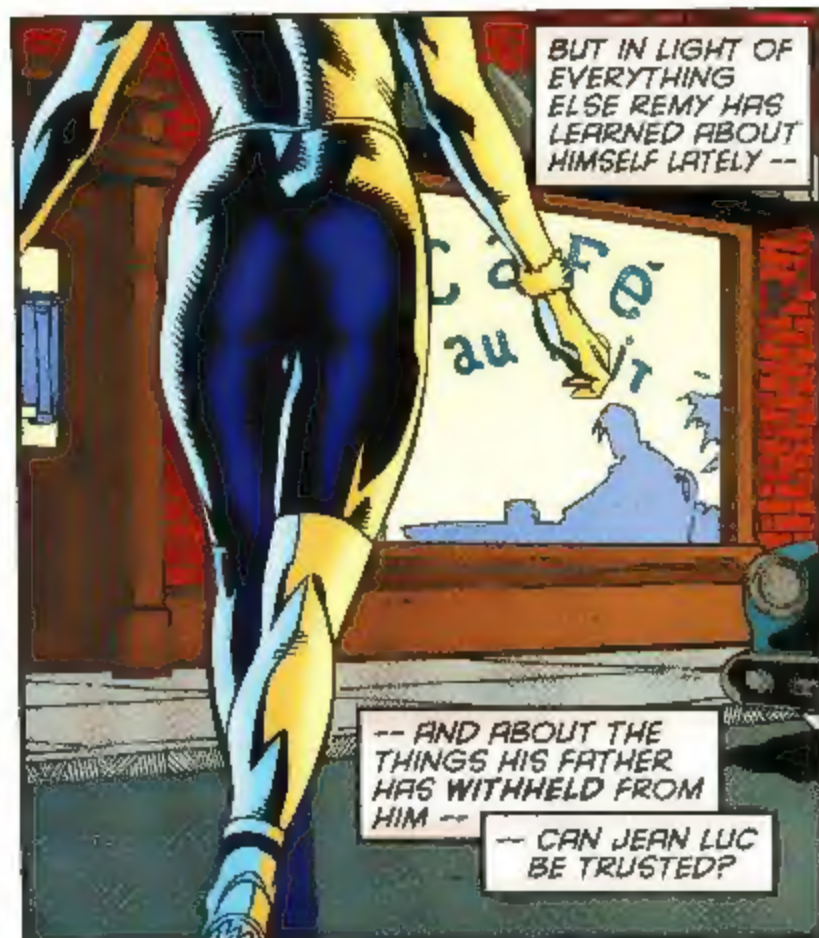
WHEN DOES A GOOD LEADER -- WHO LEADS BY EXAMPLE -- CONTRADICT THE ACTIONS OF A SMART LEADER -- WHO DOESN'T PUT HIMSELF AT RISK OVER MINOR ASSIGNMENTS?

OR IS IT MORE THAN THAT? IS HE AFRAID OF WHAT SECRETS THE HOSPITAL MIGHT HOLD?



HE WAS SUPPOSEDLY ABANDONED AS A BABY. THE GUILD TOOK HIM FROM THIS HOSPITAL MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS AGO.

HIS ADOPTIVE FATHER, JEAN LUC LEBEAU, TOLD HIM THERE WERE NO RECORDS OF HIS REAL BIRTH PARENTS.



BUT IN LIGHT OF EVERYTHING ELSE REMY HAS LEARNED ABOUT HIMSELF LATELY --

-- AND ABOUT THE THINGS HIS FATHER HAS WITHHELD FROM HIM --

-- CAN JEAN LUC BE TRUSTED?



WEEKS AGO, HIS FATHER APPOINTED REMY AS PATRIARCH OF THE GUILD -- MUCH TO THE CHAGRIN OF THE OTHER GUILD MEMBERS.

HE SAID THAT SOME THINGS HAD TO BE DONE -- DANGEROUS, IMPORTANT THINGS --

-- TOLD REMY THAT THE GUILD PROPHECIES ABOUT LE DIABLE BLANC, THE WHITE DEVIL BORN WITH THE RED EYES --

-- DICTATED THAT REMY UNIFY THE THIEVES AND ASSASSINS GUILDS IN ORDER TO PAVE THE WAY FOR THE RESURRECTION OF THE OLD KINGDOM.

WHEN REMY SAID, "COME AGAIN?" HIS FATHER SMILED AND WALKED OUT.

ONLY DAYS LATER, LIFE GOT EVEN MORE COMPLICATED (AS IF...) --

-- WHEN HE LEARNED THAT THE NEW SON, A MAN TO WHOM REMY WAS INDEBTED FOR HAVING SAVED HIS LIFE --

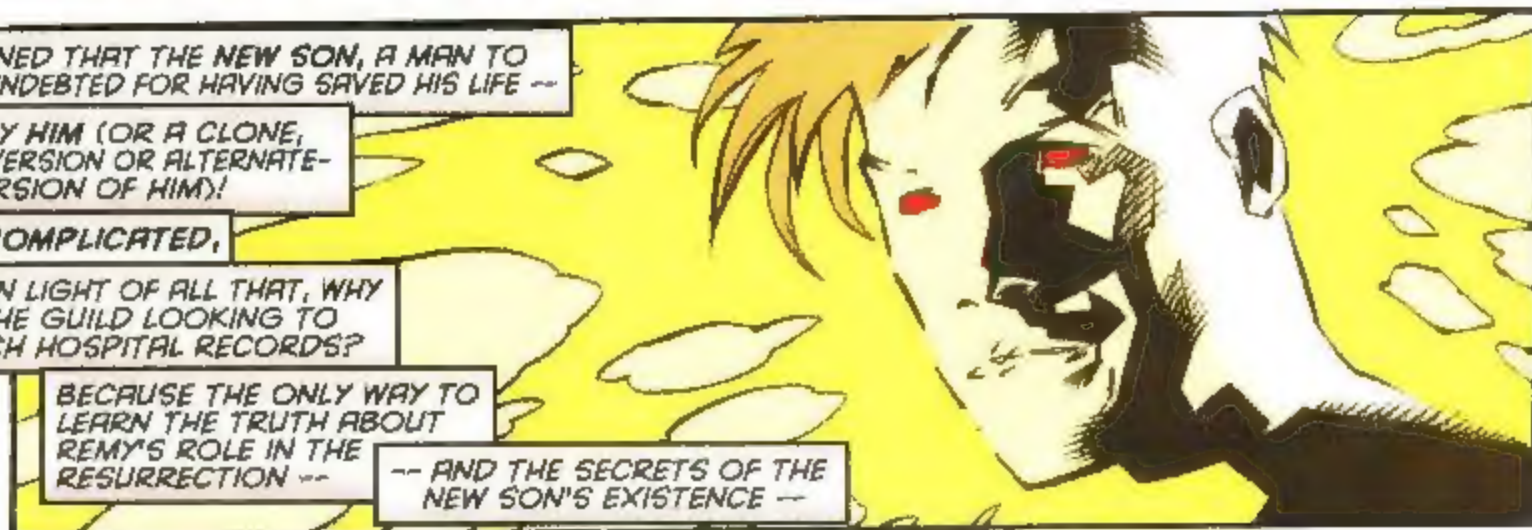
-- WAS ACTUALLY HIM (OR A CLONE, ALTERNATE-TIME VERSION OR ALTERNATE-EARTH VERSION OF HIM)?

WE DID SAY COMPLICATED, RIGHT?

SO IN LIGHT OF ALL THAT, WHY IS THE GUILD LOOKING TO PINCH HOSPITAL RECORDS?

BECAUSE THE ONLY WAY TO LEARN THE TRUTH ABOUT REMY'S ROLE IN THE RESURRECTION --

-- AND THE SECRETS OF THE NEW SON'S EXISTENCE --







-- IS FOR REMY TO LEARN THE TRUTH ABOUT HIMSELF!

A SUBJECT REMY HAD ALWAYS PREFERRED TO IGNORE.

WHICH, IN TURN, EXPLAINS THAT WHOLE PIT IN THE GUT THING...

EMIL'S IN?

ALL IT TOOK WAS A LITTLE BIT O' BODY --



-- AND A LITTLE BIT O' BRAUN.



"SO YAH, OF COURSE HE'S IN. EMIL'LL BE OUT IN A JIF.

"WE BEEN DOIN' DIS A LONG TIME WITOUT YOU AS OUR BOSS MAN, REMY."



I KNOW, I KNOW. STUPID T' BE NERVOUS, neh?

YOU BEEN NERVOUS SINCE YOU WAS A PUP.

YOU THINK SO?

SOME PEOPLE CAN SEE THROUGH DAT WHOLE "MR. SLICK" COVER.



EMIL. HE'S SUCH AN IMBECILE.

BWAGAH!



WELL?

ZIP. ZERO. ZILCH. NADA. BUPKISS.

I WAS AFRAID THEY WOULDN'T HAVE KEPT RECORDS THAT OLD.





OH, THEY GOT  
BIRTH RECORDS  
FROM OVER  
TWENTY YEARS  
AGO --  
-- JUST  
NONE ON A  
**BABY JOHN  
DOE** BORN  
WIT' RED  
EYES!

DID TH'  
GUILD TAKE ME  
FROM TH' HOSPITAL  
FOR TH' **ANTIQUARY**  
BEFORE THEY COULD  
EVEN REGISTER  
ME?

WAS I  
EVEN BORN  
HERE OR WAS  
I BROUGHT  
HERE?



SOMEONE ERASED  
**SIX MONTHS** WORTH OF  
HOSPITAL COMPUTER  
RECORDS --

-- DAT  
CORRESPOND  
WITH DE TIME  
FRAME IN WHICH  
YOU WAS  
BORN!

WHEN  
DID THAT  
HAPPEN?

DIDN' HAVE  
TIME T' SCRUB  
INTO TH' HARD  
DRIVE.

DAT'S MORE  
**THEOREN'S GIG**  
ANYWAYS.

MAYBE WE  
HAVE T' COME  
BACK WIT' HIM  
ALONG. MERCY'LL  
STILL HAVE HER  
SECRET WEAPON  
WIT' HER...

YOU  
CHILD!



HE CAN'T GET INTO THE BANTER.  
HE'S LOST IN HIS OWN MOUNTING  
SENSE OF FRUSTRATION.

HE HATES NOT KNOWING.

HE HATES FEARING.

AND MOST OF ALL... HE  
HATES THAT FOR MOST  
OF HIS LIFE...

... HE'S KNOWN  
LITTLE ELSE BUT  
NOT KNOWING  
AND FEAR...

**F**OR DECADES, THE **BOUDREAU** MANSION OUTSIDE  
NEW ORLEANS HOUSED THE **ASSASSINS GUILD**.

IT NOW SERVES AS THE LINEASY MEETING PLACE FOR THE  
ONCE-RIVAL GUILDS, NOW UNIFIED BY THE JARRING DECISION  
BY **REMY LEBEAU** AND --

-- **BELLA DONNA BOUDREAU**,  
Matriarch of the **ASSASSINS**  
AND **REMY'S** EX-WIFE!

MINISTERS **TOME** AND **HOARD**,  
FORMERLY OF THE **ANTIQUARY'S**  
CLAN, NOW INCORPORATED INTO  
THE UNIFIED GUILD --

-- PRESIDE OVER A  
RELIGIOUS CEREMONY  
CALLED THE **UNVEILING**.

INVOKING THE PRAYERS TO  
CONCLUDE THE CEREMONY  
ARE **GRIS GRIS**, **THEOREN  
MARCEAUX**, **BELLA DONNA**  
AND THE GUILD'S SPIRITUAL  
HEALER, **TANTE MATTIE**.









WASHINGTON D.C.  
THE PENTAGON.

MY  
APOLOGIES  
FOR REQUESTING  
SUCH A LATE  
VISIT, AGENT  
DENTI.



NOT  
NECESSARY,  
PROFESSOR  
XAVIER.

I WAS A  
BIT SURPRISED  
WHEN YOU CONTACTED  
MY OFFICE AT THE  
COMMISSION ON  
SUPERHUMAN  
ACTIVITIES --

-- ASKING  
TO SEE SOME OF  
MY OLD MENTOR,  
FRED DUNCAN'S  
FILES --

-- BUT FAR  
BE IT FOR HIS  
PUPIL, CARL  
DENTI, TO  
KEEP YOU  
FROM YOUR  
WORK!



YES, INDEED --  
WHEN -- FRED OFTEN  
SPOKE HIGHLY  
OF YOU.

A REAL  
UP AND  
COMER.

MUCH APPRECIATED  
COMING FROM SOMEONE  
AS REVERED IN THE STUDY  
OF GENETIC MUTATIONS  
AS CHARLES  
XAVIER IS!



WONDER WHAT  
XAVIER WOULD SAY IF  
HE KNEW THAT I USED  
TO BE X-CUTIONER AND  
THAT I KNOW HE'S THE  
FOUNDER OF THE  
X-MEN?

WONDER WHAT  
DENTI WOULD SAY IF  
HE KNEW THAT THE "XAVIER"  
HE'S BUTT-KISSING IS REALLY  
MR. MUTANT-SHAPE-  
SHIFTER COURIER?



BRRRING

'SCUSE ME,  
SIR.

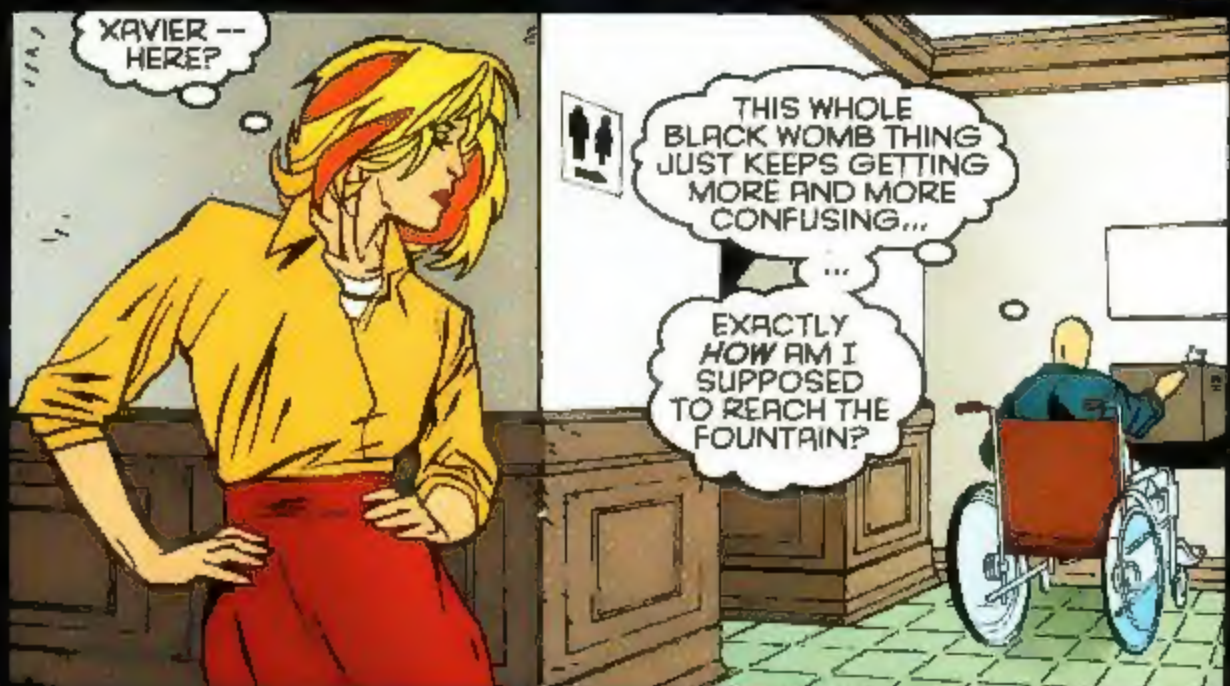
OF  
COURSE.

ESPECIALLY  
SINCE THAT'S THE  
CALL WE PLANNED  
TO DRAW YOU  
AWAY...

MIGHT I  
BEGIN MY  
WORK?

GO RIGHT  
AHEAD.









P MY OH MY, EITHER CHARLES IS KEEPING SOMETHING A SECRET --



-- OR SOMEONE IS IMPERSONATING HIM!

JUST LIKE POLITICAL ATTACHE MILICENT HARDWICK IS REALLY BEING IMPERSONATED BY --

-- MYSTIQUE!



NEW ORLEANS...

WELL, THIS IS EITHER GOOD NEWS OR BAD NEWS.



HOW SO, GOOD NEWS?

MAYBE THERE'S NOTHIN' WE'RE S'POSED T' KNOW, BEL.

YOU REALLY BELIEVE DAT, CHIL'?

Non.

GOOD. DIDN'T TINK I HELPED RAISE NO FOOL.

BUT WHAT ARE WE T' DO, TANTE MATTIE?

TOME AND HOARD *SWEAR* DAT DE ANTIQUARY NEVER TAMPERED WITH DE CASKET OF ALL TOMORROWS.

AND *BELIEVE* ME, IT WAS IN DEIR BEST INTERESTS TO ANSWER MY QUESTIONS TRUTHFULLY.

NO... I'M SURE THEY DIDN' KNOW IT WAS EMPTY...



... 'CAUSE I'M FIGURIN' IT WAS EMPTIED *AFTER* THEY BROUGHT IT OUT OF TH' ANTIQUARY'S VAULTS...

DOES HE KNOW MORE THAN HE'S LETTING ON? HARD FOR THEM TO TELL, SINCE REMY PLAYS IT SO CLOSE TO THE VEST.

HARD FOR REMY TO EVEN TELL, SINCE HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE GUILD'S HISTORY, ITS PROPHECIES AND HIS ROLE IN THEM --





--- ARE ALL  
SO... JUMBLED  
TOGETHER.

A TRIP THROUGH TIME:

MR. SINISTER SPLICING GENETIC  
MEMORY ENGRAMS INTO YOUR HEAD...

... COMBINED WITH A  
SURGICAL PROCEDURE  
THAT CREATED THE  
INFINITE POTENTIAL  
WITHIN YOU TO BECOME --

-- FOR THE BRIEFEST  
MOMENT IN TIME --

-- A CONDUIT FOR  
A LOT OF KINETIC  
ENERGY...

... MIGHT TEND TO LEAVE  
A PERSON KINDA...

... JUMBLED.

TANTE -- YOU  
MUST KNOW MORE  
ABOUT DE OLD  
KINGDOM DEN WE DO!

ALL'S I  
KNOW, BEL, IS  
DAT WHEN DE TIME  
CAME, DE CASKET  
WAS GON' TELL US!



WORTHLESS  
PIECE OF  
WOOD!

SLAMSSJSS



BEATIN' UP THE  
TREASURE CHEST  
WON' DO  
MUCH.

POINT ME IN THE DIRECTION OF  
WHERE MY FRUSTRATION SHOULD  
BE VENTED, REMY, AND I'LL BE  
GLAD TO RELEASE IT  
THERE!

SHAKT

WHY  
BOTHER WITH THIS  
STUPID RESURRECTION  
IF THE FOOLS WHO RAN THE  
GUILDS FOR SO LONG COULDN'  
EVEN INFORM US HOW TO  
PROPERLY ACHIEVE IT?!



WHY, CHIL'? BECAUSE IT HAD  
BEEN LONG PROPHESED DAT  
DE RESURRECTION  
OF DE OLD KINGDOM  
WOULD MEAN --

-- HEAVEN ON  
EARTH!

YOU'D  
LET A LI'L  
SETBACK  
DENY US ALL  
OF DAT?

OR DENY DE  
MAN ANOINTED AS  
DE HARBINGER OF HEAVEN  
ON EARTH DE OPPORTUNITY  
TO FULFILL HIS DESTINY?



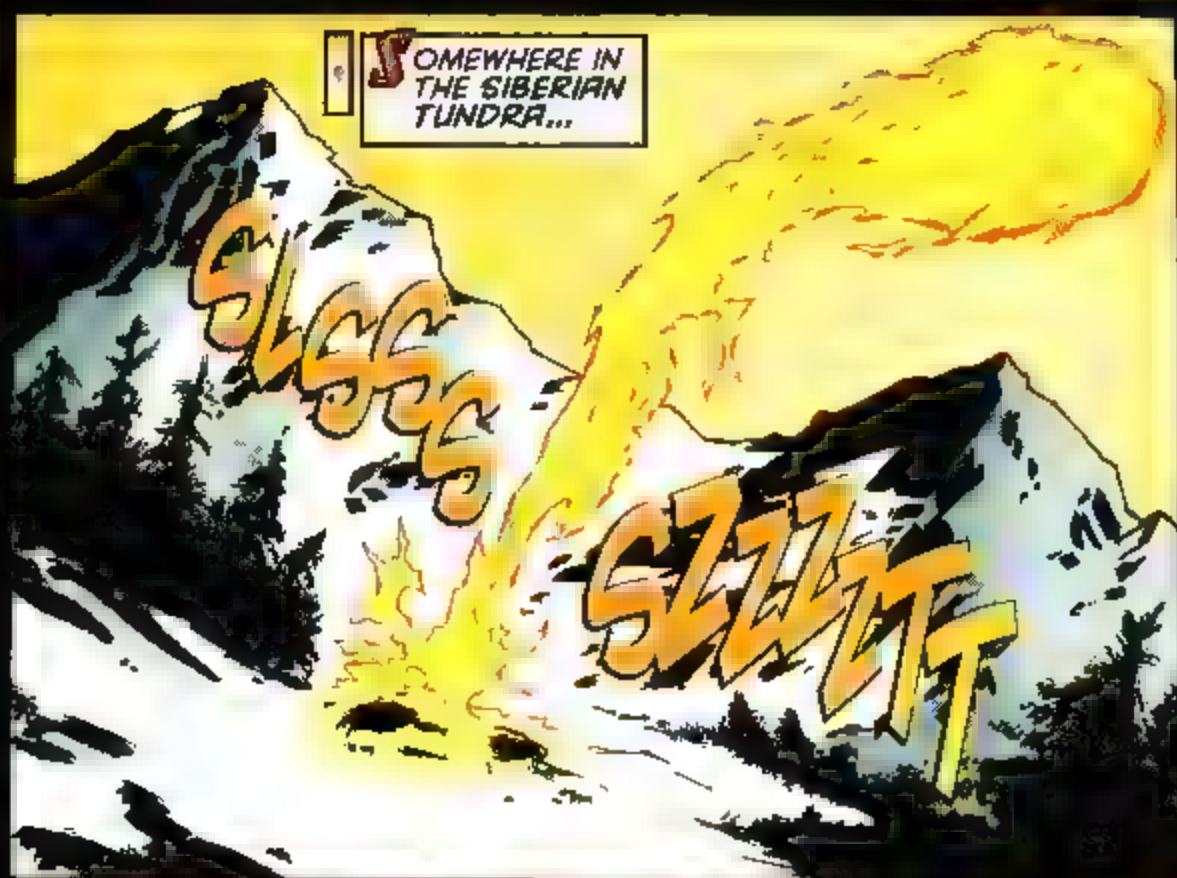
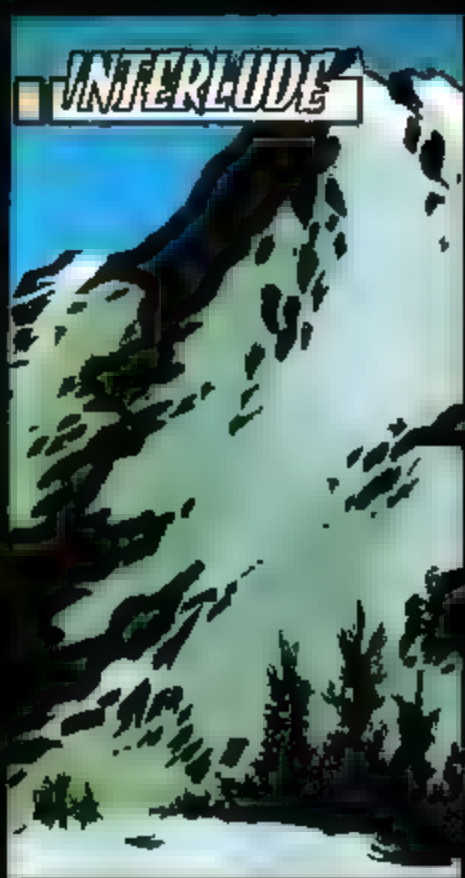
Oh, AND EXACTLY WHO  
WOULD DIS "MESSIAH"  
BE --?!

Oh.

YOU'RE  
KIDDING,  
RIGHT?

NOPE, IT'S  
ME. LE DIABLE  
BLANC.  
JOKE'S ON ALL'A  
THEM, huh, BEL?









HE  
INSULTED ME,  
MARCEAUX --  
YOU HEARD  
HIM!

*slaps*

EH --?

PLAYTIME'S  
OVER,  
KIDD.ES.



YOU'RE  
KINETICALLY  
CHARGIN' DE BEADS  
IN MY DREADS?!  
STOP IT, YOU'LL  
BURN MY HEAD  
OFF!

ACTUALLY,  
MY MUTANT POWER  
WAS CHARGIN'  
TH' HAIR ITSELF,  
GRIS.

*slaps*

SMELLS  
LIKE IT,  
TOO.

DON' FRET,  
GRIS, DREADS  
ARE SO OUT TH'S  
WEEK.

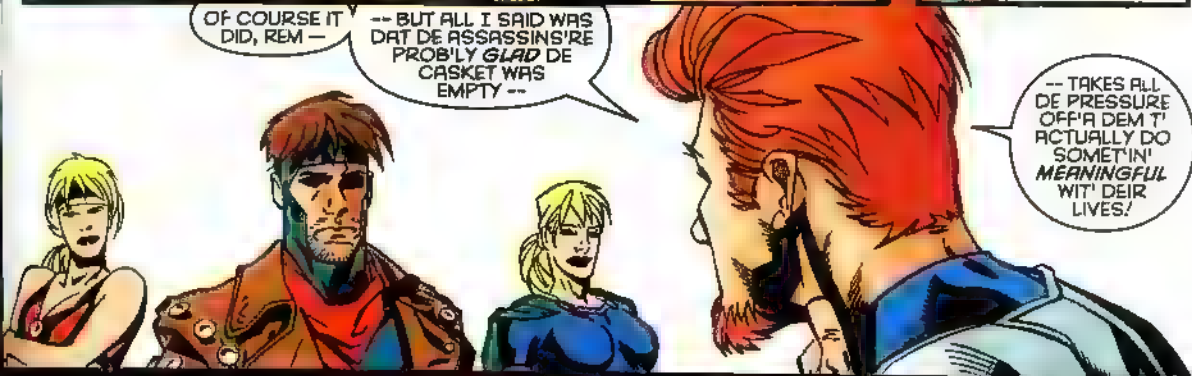


HUSH UP,  
EMIL -- YA  
MOUTH PROB'LY  
INSTIGATED THIS...

OF COURSE IT  
DID, REM --

-- BUT ALL I SAID WAS  
DAT DE ASSASSINS'RE  
PROB'LY GLAD DE  
CASKET WAS  
EMPTY --

-- TAKES ALL  
DE PRESSURE  
OFF'A DEM T'  
ACTUALLY DO  
SOMET'IN'  
MEANINGFUL  
WIT' DEIR  
LIVES!







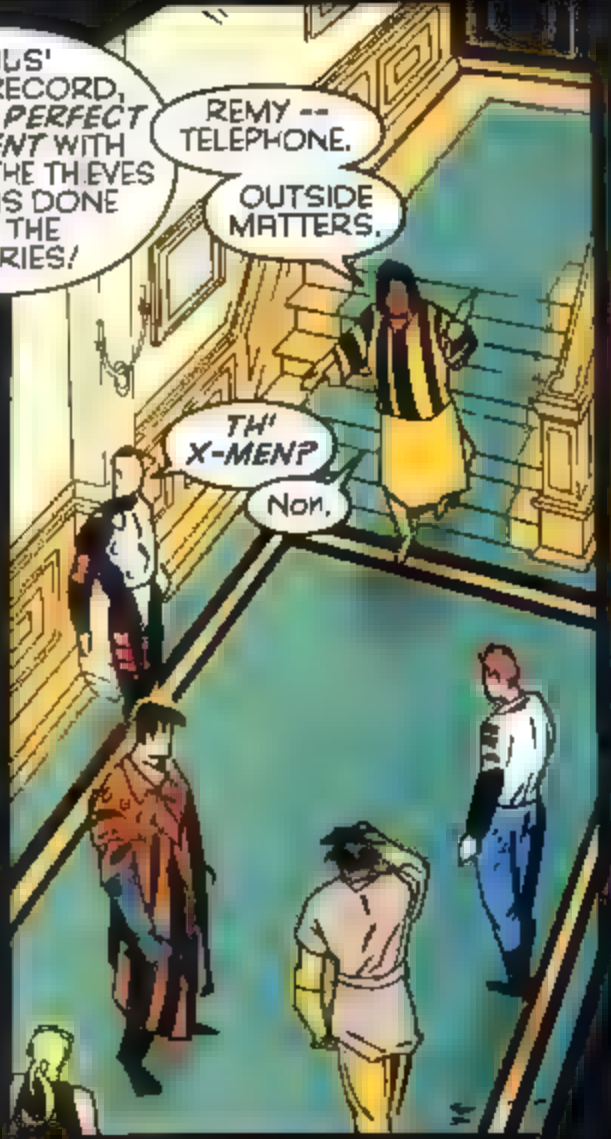
HE'S OBNOXIOUS, BUT I CAN'T FAULT HIS LOGIC.

YOU DON'T RESPECT US... BUT YOU EXPECT US T' RESPECT YOU?

Non. I EXPECT YOL T' RESPECT BEL'S DECISION.



AN JUS' FOR THE RECORD, I'M NOT IN PERFECT AGREEMENT WITH EVERYTHIN' THE THIEVES GUILD HAS DONE OVER THE CENTURIES!



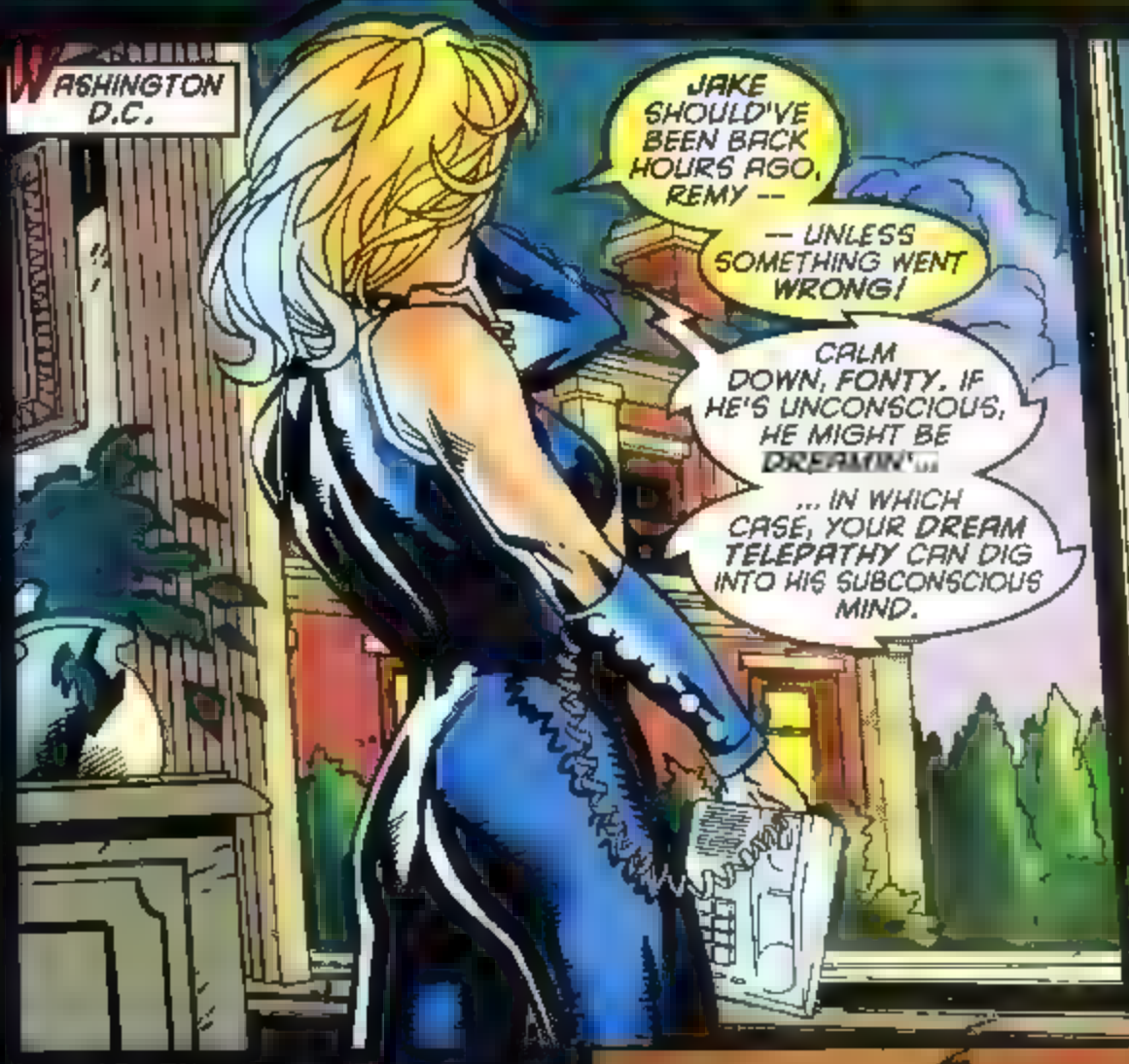
REMY -- TELEPHONE.

OUTSIDE MATTERS.

TH' X-MEN?

Non.

WASHINGTON D.C.

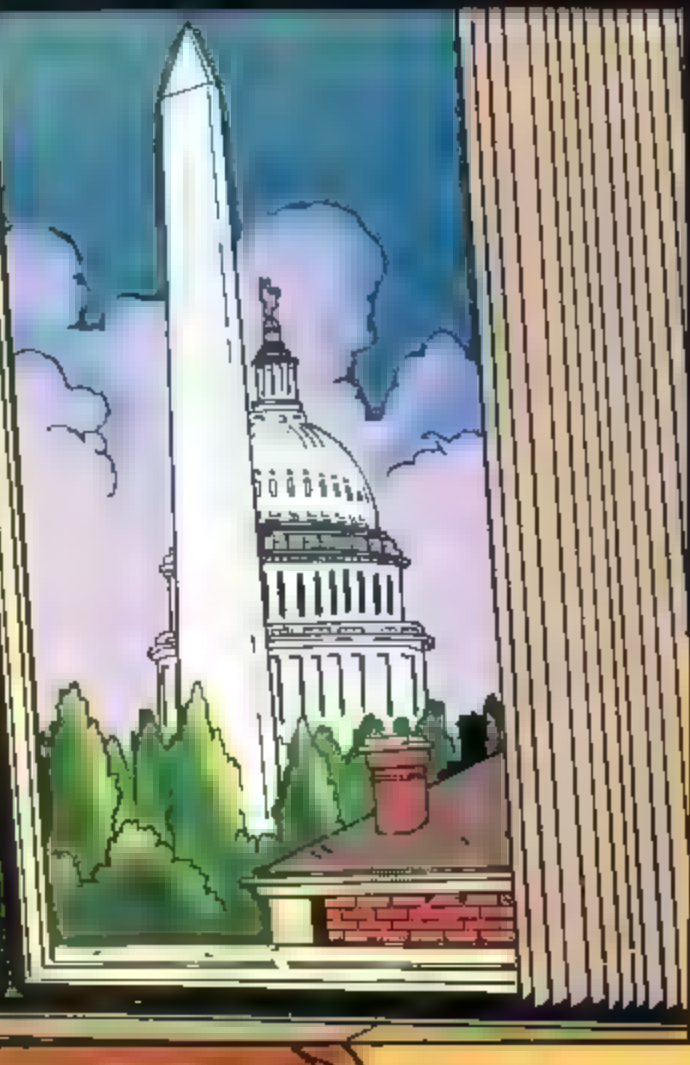


JAKE SHOULD'VE BEEN BACK HOURS AGO, REMY --

-- UNLESS SOMETHING WENT WRONG!

CALM DOWN, FONTY. IF HE'S UNCONSCIOUS, HE MIGHT BE DREAMIN'...

... IN WHICH CASE, YOUR DREAM TELEPATHY CAN DIG INTO HIS SUBCONSCIOUS MIND.



YOU TRY THAT ON YOUR END. I'LL WORK SOMETHIN' UP FROM HERE...

REMY HANGS UP. WHAT DOES HE DO?

WALK INTO THE PENTAGON. BREAK THE FIRST RULE OF CHESS -- DON'T RISK YOUR KING FOR A PAWN.

BUT DOES THAT RULE STILL APPLY WHEN THE PAWN IS YOUR FRIEND?







MORNING.

ROBERT LORD.

ATTACHE TO SENATOR KENNEDY, FOR A MEETING WITH CSA AGENT CARL DENTI.

THE ACCENT IS PURE BOSTON. ALL HE'S MISSING IS A RED SOX CAP AND THE CLAAM CHOWDAH.

REMY WAITS, IDLY IMPATIENT, WHILE THE GUARD CHECKS HIS SECURITY LOG ENTRIES.

IT TOOK THEOREN MARCEAUX MOST OF THE NIGHT TO HACK INTO THE PENTAGON SYSTEMS --

-- AND CREATE ANOTHER FAKE ENTRY FOR ROBERT LORD'S "MEETING".

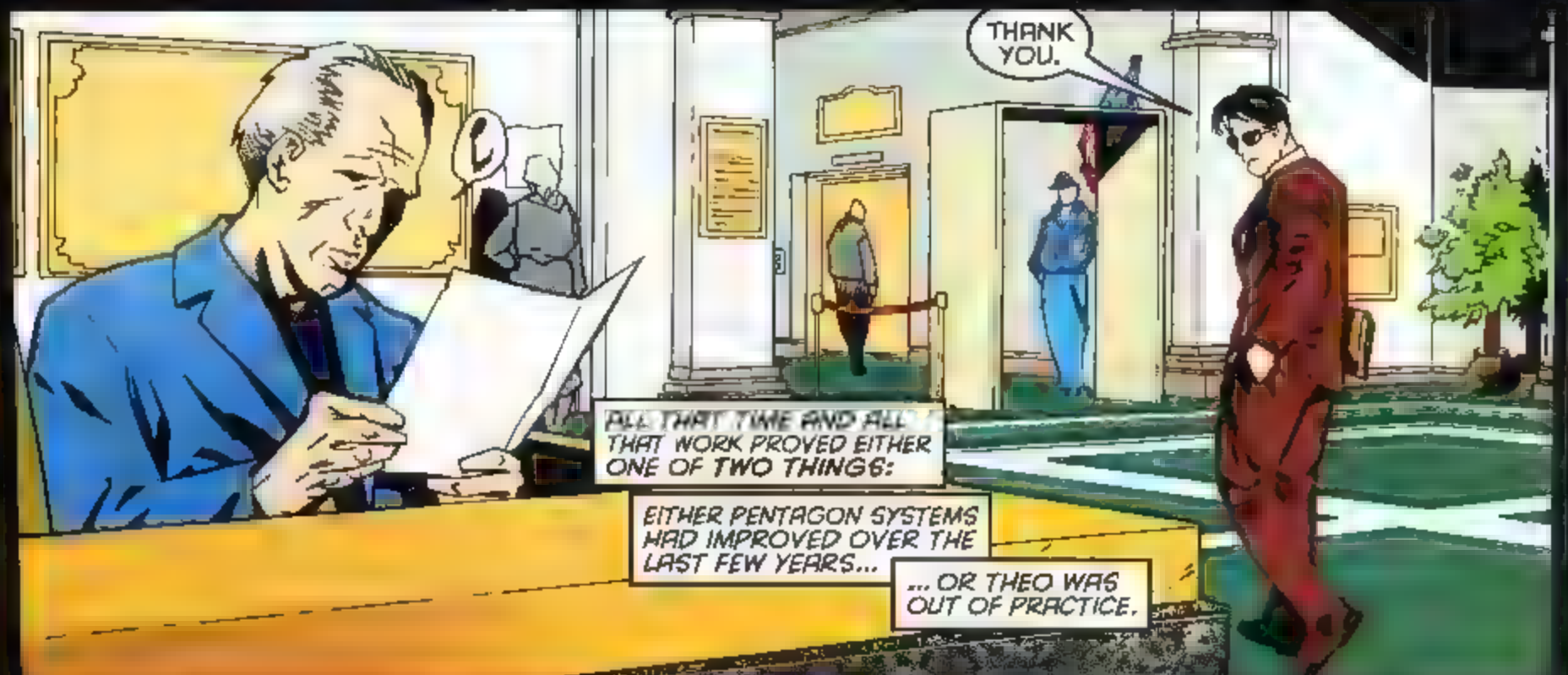
HERE WE GO. CLEAR TO PASS.

-- TO CREATE A FAKE ENTRY SHOWING "XAVIER" HAVING LEFT AT 10:30 LAST NIGHT --

-- TO VERIFY THAT DENTI LEFT AT MIDNIGHT, HAVING SEEN THE ENTRY LOG SHOWING XAVIER "LEFT" --

-- SCOUR THE APPOINTMENT LOGS TO CONFIRM DENTI WOULD BE OUT THIS MORNING --

WALK THROUGH THE SECURITY CHECK AND HAVE A GOOD DAY.



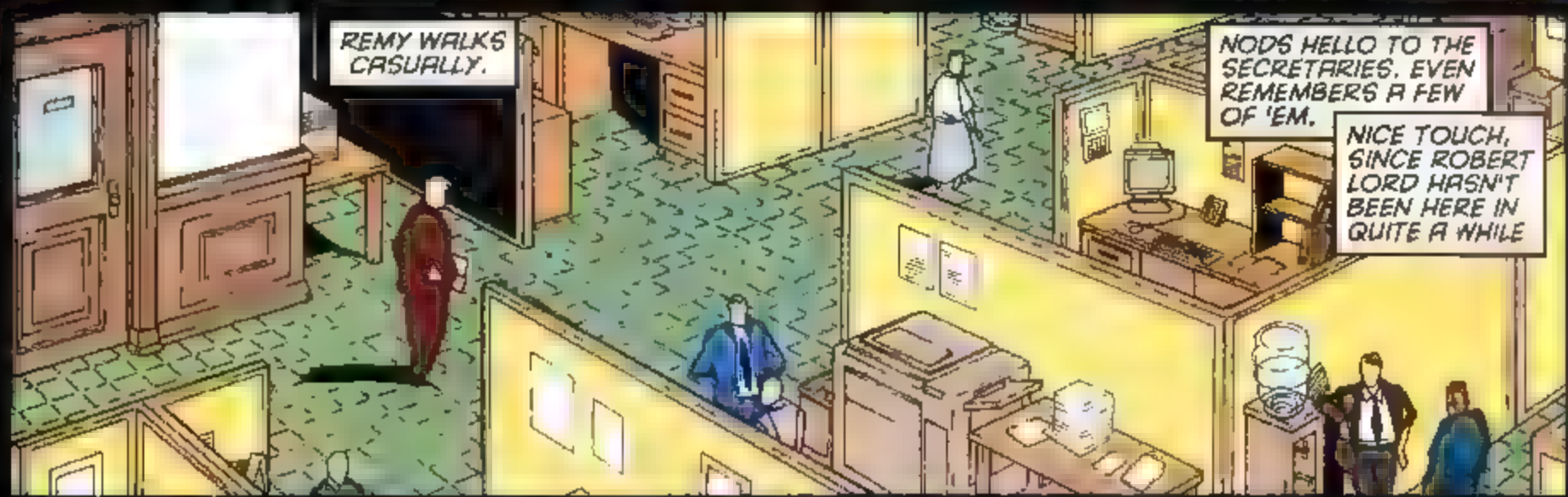
THANK YOU.

ALL THAT TIME AND ALL THAT WORK PROVED EITHER ONE OF TWO THINGS:

EITHER PENTAGON SYSTEMS HAD IMPROVED OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS...

... OR THEO WAS OUT OF PRACTICE.

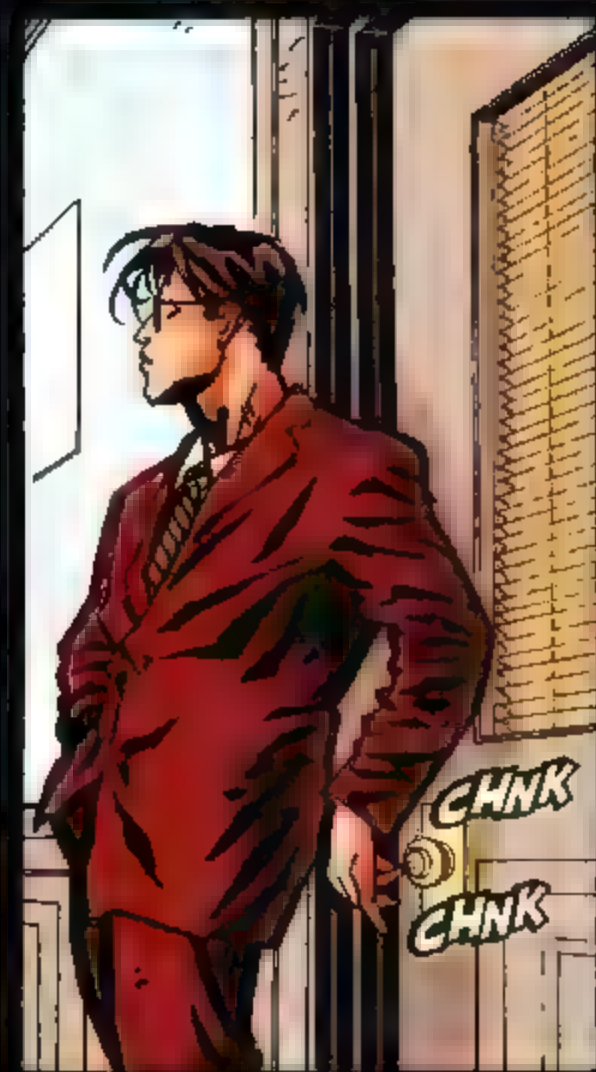




REMY WALKS CASUALLY.

NODS HELLO TO THE SECRETARIES. EVEN REMEMBERS A FEW OF 'EM.

NICE TOUCH, SINCE ROBERT LORD HASN'T BEEN HERE IN QUITE A WHILE







SURPRISED, GAMBIT?

MYSTIQUE,  
LOOKING VERY...  
GOOD.

I ADMIT  
TO SOME SENSE  
OF INTRIGUE THAT  
JACOB GAVIN JR. --  
THE COURIER -- IS  
NOW FROZEN IN THE  
PRIME FORM OF  
A FEMALE --  
-- AND  
THAT HE USED HIS  
SHAPESHIFTING ABILITIES  
TO IMPERSONATE XAVIER  
AND INFILTRATE THE  
PENTAGON --



-- BUT THE *REAL* SURPRISE  
CAME UPON LEARNING HE'S  
BEEN DRAFTED INTO  
YOUR X-MEN OUTFIT,  
LEBEAU.

HE *HASN'T*.  
THE SPANDEX WOULD  
LOOK *LAME* ON  
HIM.

WELL, ON  
THE OLD JAKE  
ANYWAY, GLESS IT  
WOULD LOOK  
SMOOTH ON  
JACK E.

THIS GIG  
HAS *NOTHIN'*  
T' DO WIT' TH'  
X-MEN.

YOU'RE  
ACTING RATHER  
BLASE FOR SOMEONE  
WHOSE OPERAT ON  
HAS JUST BEEN  
FLUSHED DOWN THE  
TOILET --

-- AND IS  
IN THE SCOPE  
OF ONE OF THE  
WORLD'S DEADLIEST  
TERRORISTS!

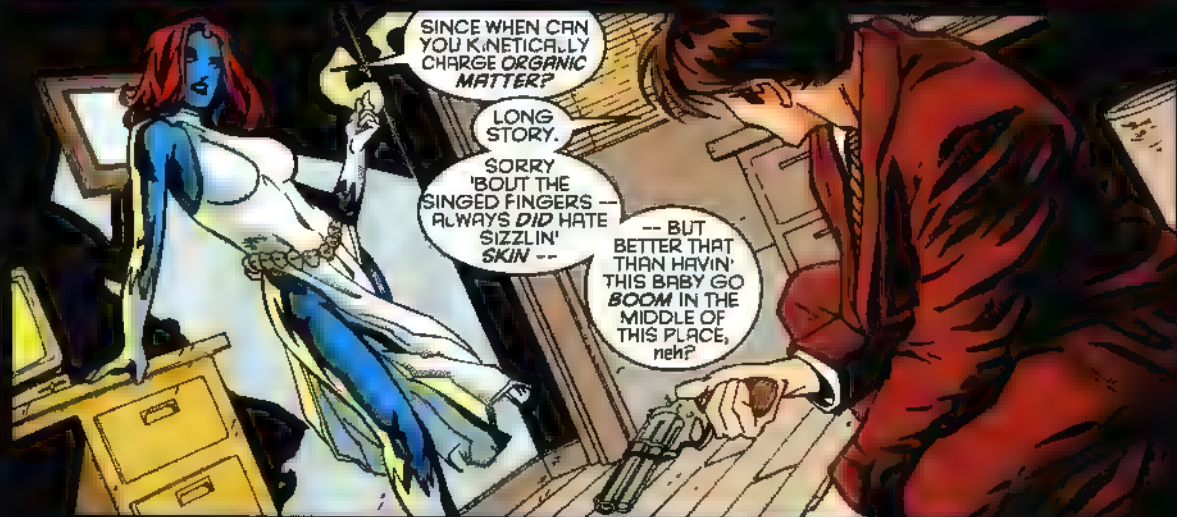
Yah, GLESS I  
SHOULD BE GLAKIN' --  
GO FIGURE, I'M *NOT*.



AAH!

SLS

YOU  
BURNED MY  
HAND!



SINCE WHEN CAN  
YOU KINETICALLY  
CHARGE ORGANIC  
MATTER?

LONG  
STORY.

SORRY 'BOUT THE  
SINGED FINGERS --  
ALWAYS *DID* HATE  
SIZZLIN' SKIN --

-- BUT  
BETTER THAT  
THAN HAVIN'  
THIS BABY GO  
BOOM IN THE  
MIDDLE OF  
THIS PLACE,  
neh?



APPARENTLY, YOU'VE UNDERGONE SOME CHANGES THAT I HAVEN'T BEEN INFORMED ABOUT.

I DON'T LIKE BEING UNINFORMED.

CAUSE KNOWLEDGE IS *POWER* T' YOU, MYSTIQUE --

-- AND RIGHT NOW, TAKE MY WORD FOR IT WHEN I TELL YOU, S' FAR AS MY SECRETS'RE CONCERNED, *IGNORANCE IS BLISS!*

VERY WELL, BACK TO THE MATTER AT HAND -- WHY'D YOU SEND YOUR GAL FRIDAY HERE?

HEY!

WAY I SEE IT, YOU GOT THE GOODS ON ME, BUT I GOT THE GOODS ON YOU.

*STALEMATE.* WHAT SAY WE BOTH WALK AWAY WIT'OUT DAMAGIN' WHAT EITHER ONE OF US IS TRYIN' T' ACCOMPLISH.

THAT'S WHY WHEN I DISCOVERED YOUR SECRETARY'S RUSE --

HEY!

-- AND SHE SUNG LIKE A PRETTY BIRD --

-- I KNEW THAT IF WE SAT QUIETLY AND WAITED, YOU'D COME TO RESCUE THE FAIR DAMSEL IN DISTRESS...

HEY!

IS IT PC TO BE A "DAMSEL" NOWADAYS?

YOU SEE, REMY, COURIER TOLD ME WHO SHE WAS WORKING FOR...

... BUT NOT WHY.

AND I DO SO LIKE TO KNOW THE WHY OF THINGS...



AN' I MUST BE THE MOTHER OF MYSTERY WHEN IT COMES T' WHY, HUH?

WHOOPS... I SA D, MOTHER... DID THAT STRIKE A NERVE?

MY FOSTER-DAUGHTER ROGUE -- AND HER RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU IS... NONE OF MY CONCERN.

I IMAGINE YOU'D BE SURPRISED TO KNOW I WAS **DISAPPOINTED** WHEN I HEARD YOU COULDN'T WORK THINGS OUT WITH HER.

I THINK YOU WOULD HAVE MADE EACH OTHER **HAPPY**...

... AND I WANT **NOTHING** MORE THAN FOR HER TO BE **HAPPY**.

Yah, THAT AN' TALK AWAY SO YOU CAN **DISTRACT** ME --

-- WHILE YOU PULL OUT A **BLADE**.

ACTUALLY...  
... **TWO**.

AH... WATCH WHERE YER POINTIN' THAT THING...

CARE TO PLACE A **WAGER** ON WHETHER YOU CAN **CHARGE** THE **BLADES** OUT OF MY HANDS BEFORE I CAN **CUT** YOU?

TH' GAMBLE MIGHT NOT BE WORTH THE -- ahem -- **COLLATERAL DAMAGE**...

REAL QUESTION IS -- SAYIN' YOU **DO** STAB ME --  
-- CAN YOU **SHAPESHIFT** YOUR WAY OUT OF TH' **TIME DELAY KINETIC FUSE** I JUST LIT BEFORE YOUR **BODY** BLOWS UP LIKE A **BOMB**?









I WONDER HOW  
THE *REAL* CHARLES  
XAVIER WOULD FEEL  
ABOUT YOUR  
METHODS?



THAT'S  
WHAT I  
THOUGHT.

THE  
EGGS YOU  
JUGGLE ARE  
FRAGILE THINGS,  
LeBEAU.

TO  
REALLY  
PLAY THE  
GAME --

-- YOU HAVE  
TO LOOK AT A  
FAR *BIGGER*  
BOARD THAN THE  
X-MEN -- OR EVEN  
YOUR GUILDS --  
ARE USED TO  
SEEING.



HOW BIG A  
GAMEBOARD,  
RAVEN?



A LESSON  
FOR YOU  
THEN...

... I'LL ADMIT TO  
BEING ILL-INFORMED  
ABOUT ALL THE...  
*IMPROVEMENTS...*  
IN YOUR MUTANT  
POWERS --

-- BUT I  
WAS AWARE OF  
YOUR ABILITY TO  
LEAVE TIME-DELAY  
CHARGES.



CLIK  
CLIK







YOU HAVE  
BECOME QUITE  
ADEPT AT  
CONTROLLING  
THE MOMENT,  
REMY...

... BUT A  
REAL PLAYER  
LEARNS HOW TO  
CONTROL *ALL* THE  
POSSIBILITIES THAT  
LEAD TO AND *AWAY*  
FROM THE MOMENT!

I HAD YOU NAILED  
FOR THIRTEEN  
VIOLATIONS OF  
FEDERAL LAW  
BEFORE YOU EVEN  
WALKED INTO  
THIS OFFICE.

SO YOU  
SEE, REMY, WE  
HAVE *EACH* OTHER  
IN COMPROMISING  
POSITIONS.



SO WHY BOTHER  
PLAYIN' OUT  
TH' HAND?

CURIOSITY,  
MY UNQUENCHABLE  
THIRST FOR  
KNOWLEDGE --

-- WHICH AS  
YOU STATED, LEADS  
TO CONTROL... WHICH,  
AS I STATED, LEADS  
TO POWER.



YOU SAY THIS  
ISN'T AN X-MEN  
OPERATION... SO  
WHAT IS IT?

I HONESTLY  
DON'T KNOW  
YET.

BUT IT HAS  
T' DO WIT' MY  
PAST... AN' MY  
FUTURE.



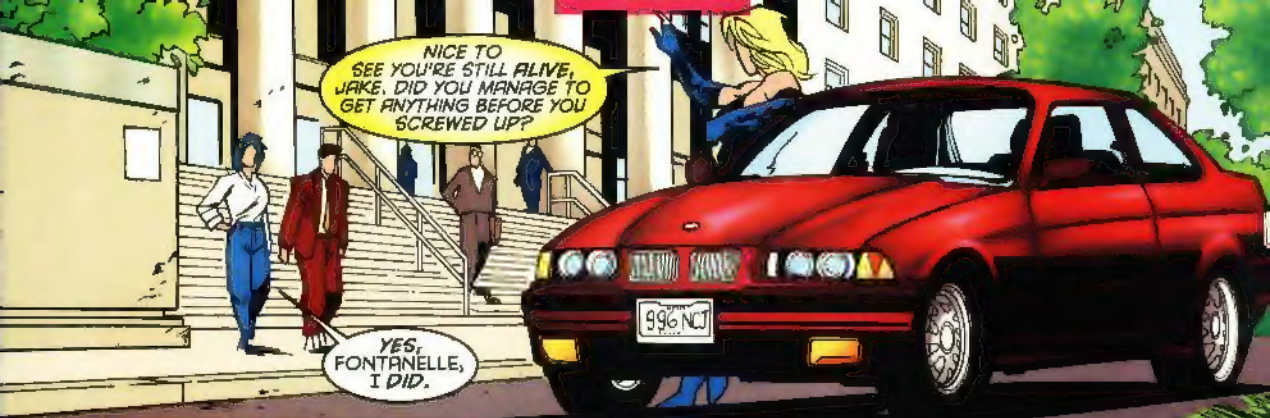
Oh, DON'T TELL ME --  
AND IT WILL SOMEHOW  
INVOLVE THE SAFETY  
OF THE *UNIVERSE*  
ITSELF?



BELIEVE IT OR NOT,  
I'M ACTUALLY FORCED  
TO CONSIDER IT  
IN TH' *PLURAL*...  
*UNIVERSES*...

THEN YOU'D  
REALLY BETTER START  
TO UNDERSTAND THE *SCOPE*  
OF THE GAMEBOARD, LEBEAU...





NICE TO SEE YOU'RE STILL ALIVE, JAKE. DID YOU MANAGE TO GET ANYTHING BEFORE YOU SCREWED UP?

YES, FONTANELLE, I DID.



GO FIGURE, YOUR MOTHER STARTED A GOVERNMENT RESEARCH PROGRAM CALLED "BLACK WOMB".



AND ALL HER INTEREST BEGAN WHEN SINISTER USED HER FOR MUTANT RESEARCH A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

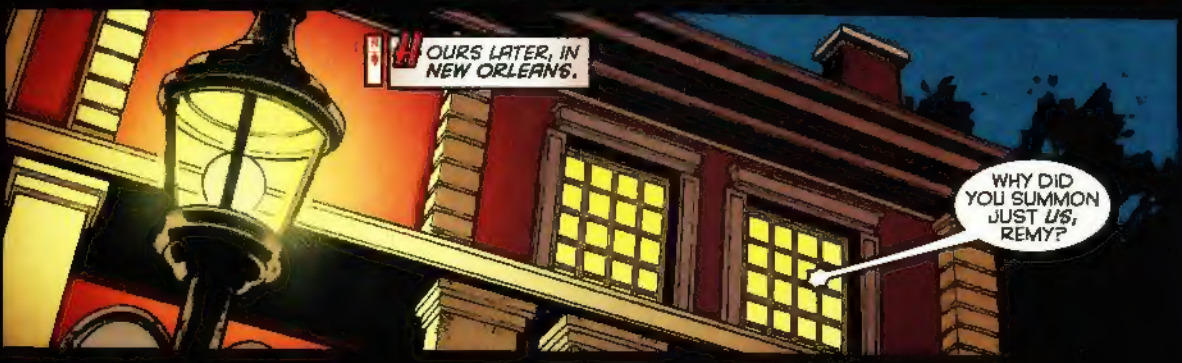


BUT THAT HAPPENED DECADES AGO. SO WHAT DOES ANY OF IT HAVE TO DO WITH REMY OR NEW SON NOW?



JUS' MEANS TH' PICTURE IS NOT ONLY GETTIN' BIGGER... IT'S ALSO GETTIN' FUZZIER...

... AN' IN SOME WAYS... IT'S ALSO GETTIN' CLEARER...



FOURS LATER, IN NEW ORLEANS.

WHY DID YOU SUMMON JUST US, REMY?





BECAUSE I KNOW  
IT WAS TH'  
TWO OF YOU,  
THEO.

YOU HACKED INTO TH'  
HOSPITAL COMPUTERS  
AND STOLE TH'  
RECORDS.

COMPUTER  
THEFT IS YOUR  
SPECIALTY.

AN' HOW  
TO DESTROY  
SOMETHIN' INSIDE  
A LOCKED CHEST  
AN' LEAVE NO  
SIGN OF IT?

WELL...  
I COULD  
DO THAT, BUT  
I DIDN' --

-- WHICH  
LEAVES THE ONLY  
OTHER MEMBER OF  
TH' GUILD WHO WAS  
PRESENT AT TH'  
CEREMONY OF TH'  
UNVEILING...

... AN'  
THAT WOULD BE  
GRIS GRIS!

SO MY  
QUESTION IS --  
WHY?



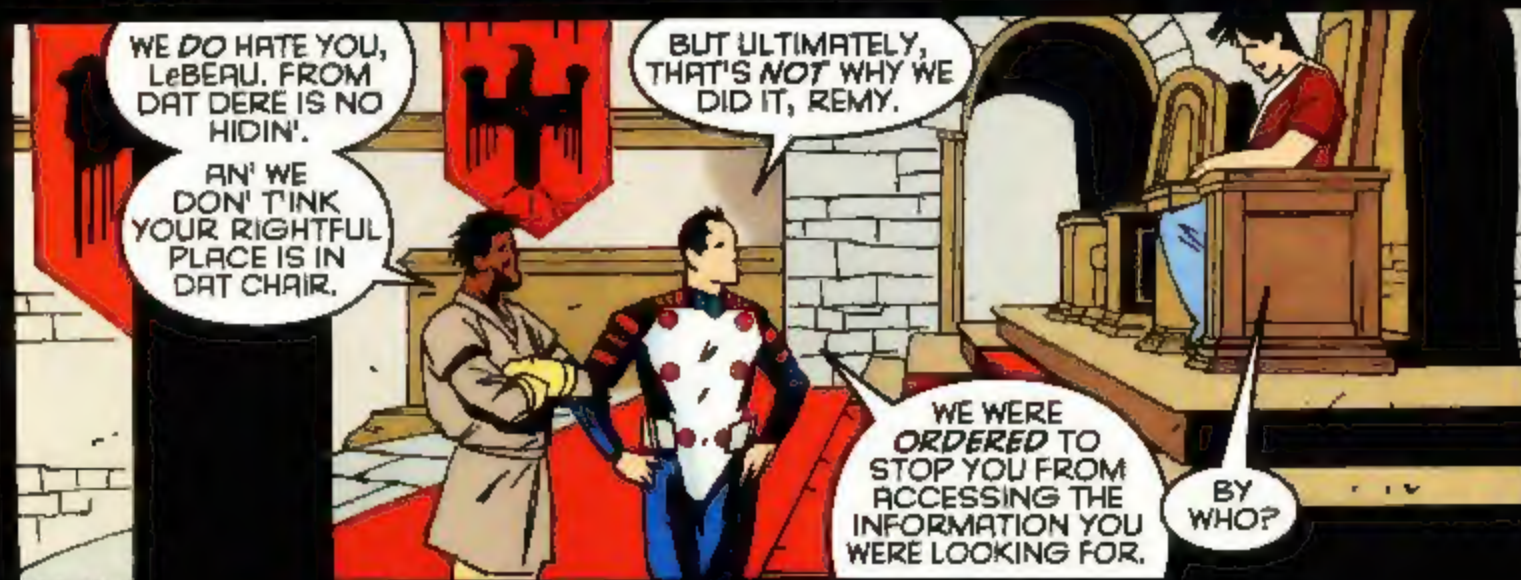
YOU BOTH HATE IT SO  
MUCH THAT I WAS  
CHOSEN T' RUN  
TH' GUILD?

HATE ME SO MUCH --  
THEOREN 'CAUSE YOU  
BLAME ME FOR YOUR  
LITTLE BROTHER ETIENNE'S  
DEATH DURIN' OUR  
TILLIN'?

GRIS GRIS  
'CAUSE YOU BLAME  
ME FOR BEL'S BROTHER  
JULIEN'S DEATH  
DURIN' TH' DUEL  
WE HAD?



SO MUCH HATRED THAT YOU'D  
PREVENT US FROM ACHIEVIN'  
WHAT TH' GUILD HAS TRIED  
T' DO FOR THOUSANDS  
OF YEARS?



WE DO HATE YOU,  
LeBEAU. FROM  
DAT DERE IS NO  
HIDIN'.

AN' WE  
DON' T'INK  
YOUR RIGHTFUL  
PLACE IS IN  
DAT CHAIR.

BUT ULTIMATELY,  
THAT'S NOT WHY WE  
DID IT, REMY.

WE WERE  
ORDERED TO  
STOP YOU FROM  
ACCESSING THE  
INFORMATION YOU  
WERE LOOKING FOR.

BY  
WHO?



BY YOUR  
FATHER!

AND REMY FEELS  
CONTROL OF THE  
MOMENT SLIP AWAY...  
AND WITH IT, ANY  
HOPE FOR CONTROL  
OF THE EVENTS THAT  
LED TO IT...

... OR THOSE  
THAT WILL  
LEAD AWAY  
FROM IT...

NEXT  
ISSUE:  
IT ALL HITS  
THE FAN!  
WHILE GAMBIT HUNTS  
FOR ANSWERS,  
HE'S HUNTED BY  
-- THE NEO!



# DEALER'S CHOICE

Who knew that a *minor* character development like the break-up of Gambit and Rogue would generate so much mail? **GAMBIT #16** certainly has set your tongues wagging. Interestingly enough, the reaction to this development was far more mixed than we expected. As a result, we will be showcasing the letters which dealt most directly (and in-depth) with Remy's love life this month, and next, we'll cover some of the more general comments on the issue.

So pick your side, and be ready to get peeved over at least one of these letters!

Dear Dealer's Choice,

I was an avid collector of X-MEN and UNCANNY X-MEN back in the early '90s. Because of certain circumstances, I couldn't keep up. For the past five years, I hadn't a clue as to what was going on in the X-world and specifically, what was up with my favorite X-Man, Gambit.

I was in a bookstore sometime in March and happened by the comic book rack and immediately spotted the cover of **GAMBIT #16**. I blinked several times, for my eyes could not believe what they were seeing. Remy and Rogue finally locking lips and he didn't seem to be about to pass out. I was floored. For the past five years, I wondered about those two and if they'd finally found a way to be together.

I forgot what I had initially gone to buy at the bookstore, picked up the comic and immediately began to read it. Little did I know that it happened to be a "breakup" issue. I couldn't help but cry after I read it. My heart broke for these two characters. Here I was 21 years old, a junior in college, and I'm sobbing in a bookstore over a couple of comic book characters!

But I am not writing to bash. That is not my intention at all.

I am excited that Fabian Nicieza is heading the writing for the **GAMBIT** monthly. In my humble opinion, Fabian Nicieza is the *best* writer that Marvel has on staff. Some of the best X-books ever written are those written by Fabian. I have since bought just about every **GAMBIT** back issue and I am quite impressed. It's a fantastic monthly and long overdue.

However disappointed and saddened I am with Remy and Rogue's breakup, I am not discouraged. I am sure that there are other fans out there that feel the same way I do, that Gambit and Rogue are the most dynamic couple in all of comic books and will always belong together. There's no topping the Southern Connection. Scott and Jean pale in comparison. Who knows? Maybe I'll have to wait another five years, but it'll be worth it. I just know that there'll be a wedding cover to go along with those of X-MEN #24 and **GAMBIT #16** hanging on my bedroom wall.

Leslie Gonzalez  
Bronx, NY

Thanks for the heartfelt letter, Leslie. We knew that breaking up the premier, on-again/off-again comics couple was bound to hit home for a number of readers. Many, like you, expressed their sorrow at this development. Others,

however, just plain got angry. Which brings us to...

**Top ten reasons why the break-up of Rogue and Gambit was unrealistic and/or stupid:**

10. They are Marvel Comics' most popular couple and fans want to see them together.

9. They love each other.

8. Now that they can touch, they can have a *real* relationship. Just because Remy can't control his powers right now, doesn't mean they can't "mess around." It just means they have to be careful.

7. The whole breakup is clearly a cheap plot device being used to revert Rogue and Gambit to the shallow

characters they were when their relationship began. For example, instead of building a lasting relationship with the woman he loves, Gambit has pushed her away and gone back to having meaningless encounters with every woman he meets (e.g. that cheap floozy Claire, with whom we see him making out in **UNCANNY X-MEN** #381).

6. The idea of Rogue and Colossus together as a couple is ludicrous. They have absolutely nothing in common. Rogue is passionate and free-spirited. She needs a man who shares her exuberance and lust for life. Colossus is down to earth and *boring*. Don't try to tell me that opposites attract. Where's the passion? Where's the excitement? You can't honestly expect us to believe that Rogue gets weak in the knees when she thinks about kissing Peter's unyielding metal lips. *Please*. The only possible reason Rogue would ever be interested in Peter is because he is safe and dependable. She doesn't love him and therefore, she won't get hurt.

5. Rogue is the ideal person to help support Gambit now that he can't control his powers. She understands what he is going through better than anyone else ever could, because she has dealt with it herself. She knows what it is like to be afraid of losing control and accidentally hurting or killing someone you love. And she can help him deal with the anger and frustration Remy is bound to experience as he tries to regain control of his new ability. Simply put: Remy needs Rogue, now more than ever.

4. They could lead the X-Men much better together than they could apart. As a couple, they would always be there to support and advise one another. The way things are now, they will be uncomfortable together and avoid each other. The pain and anger caused by their breakup will get in the way of their working relationship and ultimately the team will suffer because of it.

3. After losing Cyclops and watching Jean mourn for him, Remy and Rogue should appreciate just how precious what they have is. They've found what everyone else is looking for: True Love. That is something to cherish and protect, not destroy.

2. They've gone through way too much to be together to throw it all away now for *absolutely no reason*.

1. Did I mention they love each other? I did. All right, how about this? They are soul mates. They are meant to be together. They share much more than messed-up childhoods and checkered pasts. They have the same passionate natures, the same lust for life. They complement each other in every way. They are connected to each other, heart and soul. No matter how many times you break them up, or how many obstacles you put in their way, they will never be complete until they're together.

Carey Daves  
Chico, CA

Let's see if we understand you, Carey: You're saying that you're *opposed* to the breakup? We weren't quite sure.

Seriously, though, you make a number of valid points. Yet we can't help noticing that your stated reasons for being against this development are the very reasons that make it a compelling story. If Remy and Rogue do indeed share a bond that will see them past every obstacle put in their way, then don't they have to experience obstacles in order to overcome them?

Now, in contrast to our first two writers, the following reader couldn't be happier about the new status quo...

Dear Fabian and Co.,

Oh, fabulous joy! Oh, exultation!

The "romance" between Gambit and Rogue is finally, finally over! Thank God! What began as a flippant flirtation 10 years ago soon deteriorated into one of the most painful, abusive relationships ever depicted in a comic book.

Where two characters started off as interesting and reasonably sane, one of them soon showed abusive, manipulative and narcissistic tendencies whilst the other grew more and more masochistic, depressed and suicidal. When Gambit returned from Antarctica, I had high hopes that the experience would've worked as a crucible and he would come out cleansed of the past and, after realizing that by judging and condemning him Rogue and the X-Men had revealed themselves as unworthy and heartless hypocrites, he would go on with his life.

But no. For two years we get to witness the most painful charade in which Gambit has to apologize to Rogue for being

so cruel as to "make her" leave him in Antarctica and still follows her around like a lovesick puppy. We see several instances where his "friends" (including Weapon X, Onslaught and a former terrorist) find it necessary to hammer the message home that he was a bad, bad boy who deserved all he got and was only allowed back on their sufferance. Not able to stomach so much poor characterization, I stopped reading both X-Men titles, but enjoyed—mostly—the **GAMBIT** series.

I cringed, however, when in **GAMBIT** 1999, Rogue finally realizes that maybe, perhaps, it wasn't such a wonderful idea to leave him in Antarctica, after she heard a firsthand recording of the journal of a starving and freezing Gambit—six months or so after she left Gambit to die. This did not occur to her sooner? Not that this surprised me; Rogue has been displaying narcissistic tendencies for nearly two decades and narcissism is a psychological disorder notorious for the lack of empathy displayed by those who suffer from it. Rogue was totally in character with this belated remorse. It just annoyed me that she got away with it yet again!

The hypocrisy and mounting hubris of the collective X-Men was hard enough to stomach, but the travesty of the Rogue/Remy "relationship" was just too painful to watch any longer. If Remy and Belladonna were "Romeo and Juliet," then Rogue and Remy were straight out of "Wuthering Heights." Where the one story is a tragedy wherein feuding families come between two lovers, the other is a tragedy because Kathy and Heathcliff are slowly but surely destroying each other, obsessed with one another to their deaths. But the Rogue/Remy thing is over! He told her off! The festering sore is no more! Hallelujah!!!

Marion Ros  
(Address withheld by request)

Don't hold back, Marion. Tell us how you really feel! Wow, those are certainly the most pointed comments against Rogue that we've seen in these offices. While we won't contest most of your arguments (something tells us a few other readers may want to take up that standard), we will make one minor point. You seem in your letter to gloss over the actions for which Gambit was tried in the first place. Say what you want about Rogue's narcissism, we think that *flaw* pales a bit next to making the Morlock Massacre possible.



**NEXT-ISSUE:**  
**GAMBIT VS. THE**  
**NEO!**  
**WUFF SAID!**

**MIKE**  
**RAICHT**  
ASSISTANT  
EDITOR

**MIKE**  
**MARTS**  
EDITOR

**BOB**  
**HARRAS**  
CHIEF

**DEALER'S CHOICE**

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